

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 11653 111615Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 SCA-01 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /058 W
-----097696 111622Z /44

O R 111543Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 896
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
USIA WASHDC

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STATE FOR ASST SEC CARTER (PA), EUR/SOV
USIA FOR IEU

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: OGEN, SOPN, AFSP, UR, US
SUBJECT: CORRESPONDENTS' RENT HIKES

REF: (A) STATE 189627, (B) MOSCOW 11550

1. PRESS AND CULTURAL COUNSELOR AND PRESS ATTACHE CALLED ON MFA
PRESS
DEPARTMENT HEAD VSEVOLOD SOFINSKIY AUGUST 11 TO RAISE ISSUE OF
CORRESPONDENTS' PROBLEMS WITH UPDK OVER RENT INCREASES (REPORTED REF
B). ALSO PRESENT WERE PRESS DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR VITALIY ZHURAVLEV
AND NOTETAKER FNU NATALUKHA (NEW MAN AT MFA PRESS WHO REPORTEDLY
SERVED LENGTHY TOUR AT UN).

2. P&C COUNSELOR DESCRIBED SITUATION TO SOFINSKIY IN TERMS OUTLINED
REF B. EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON UPDK'S APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS TO ENTER
INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH CORRESPONDENTS AND BITTERNESS CAUSED AMONG
CORRESPONDENTS BY INFLEXIBLE ULTIMATA. SOFINSKIY WAS TOLD THAT
UPDK'S RIGHT TO RAISE RENT WAS NOT IN QUESTION AND THAT EMBASSY DID
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 11653 111615Z

NOT PROPOSE TO NEGOTIATE ON BEHALF OF CORRESPONDENTS. ALL WE WANT
IS TO END PRESENT LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND GET BUSINESSLIKE
DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN UPDK AND CORRESPONDENTS GOING. PRESENT IMPASSE,
SAID P&C COUNSELOR, IS "POISONING THE ATMOSPHERE."

3. SOFINSKIY BEGAN HIS REPLY WITH CAVEAT THAT "I DON'T KNOW MUCH
ABOUT THIS, IT ISN'T MY AFFAIR" BUT THEN PROCEEDED TO DEMONSTRATE

ADMIRABLE GRASP OF ISSUE. SOFINSKIY SAID HE HAD RECEIVED LETTER SIGNED BY GROUP OF CORRESPONDENTS AND HAD CHECKED WITH UPDK TO DISCOVER THAT LATTER ORGANIZATION CLAIMED TO BE READY AND WILLING TO DISCUSS PARTICULARS WITH INDIVIDUAL CORRESPONDENTS ONLY. "A GROUP LETTER TO UPDK IS NOT GOING TO BE VERY EFFECTIVE," SOFINSKIY OPINED. HE ISOLATED TWO POINTS WHICH HE FELT WERE IMPORTANT: (A) MATTER WAS BILATERAL, BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL CORRESPONDENT AND UPDK, AND (B) CORRESPONDENTS THEMSELVES HAD IN EFFECT REJECTED NEGOTIATIONS ON RENT BY "CRUDE, VULGAR AND UNCIVILIZED MANNER" IN WHICH THEY RETURNED OR IGNORED LEASES SENT TO THEM BY UPDK. SOFINSKIY ADDED THAT NO ATTEMPT WAS BEING MADE TO GET CORRESPONDENTS TO LEAVE USSR -- IF THEY DON'T LIKE NEW RENTS, HE SUGGESTED, THEY CAN ALWAYS ASK UPDK FOR SMALLER APARTMENTS OR MOVE INTO HOTELS.

4. P&C COUNSELOR DREW SOFINSKIY'S ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS OBVIOUSLY MAJOR POINT WHERE SOVIET AND AMERICAN INFORMATION DIVERGED: UPDK'S READINESS TO TALK. CORRESPONDENTS HAVE CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED THAT UPDK HAS REFUSED ALL ATTEMPTS TO DISCUSS ISSUE, WHETHER WITH GROUP OF JOURNALISTS OR INDIVIDUALS. SOFINSKIY CONTINUED TO STAND BY HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT UPDK WAS EAGER TO NEGOTIATE BUT ASSUMED CORRESPONDENTS WERE UNWILLING TO TALK BECAUSE THEY HAD REJECTED DRAFT LEASES. SOFINSKIY SUGGESTED THAT BOTH HE AND EMBASSY RECHECK THEIR SOURCES AND TELL THEM WHAT THE OTHER SIDE HAD SAID. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD RAISE MATTER WITH UPDK HEAD KUZNETSOV FIRST THING ON MORNING OF AUGUST 12.
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 11653 111615Z

5. COMMENT: SOFINSKIY WAS IN EXPANSIVE, RELAXED MOOD THROUGHOUT 45-MINUTE MEETING AND NOTE OF ANNOYANCE CREPT INTO HIS VOICE ONLY WHEN HE ACCUSED CORRESPONDENTS OF CRUDE BEHAVIOR IN REJECTING UPDK'S SUGGESTED LEASES. HE OBVIOUSLY IS FULLY CONVERSANT WITH SITUATION AND UPSHOT OF HIS REMARKS SEEMS TO BE THAT UPDK MAY NOW BE READY TO MEET WITH CORRESPONDENTS INDIVIDUALLY (WITH PRESUMABLE SAME AIM OF TRYING TO FORCE WEAKER BUREAUS TO CAPITULATE AND SET PRECEDENTS FOR OTHER MEDIA). WE WILL PASS SOFINSKIY'S OBSERVATIONS ON TO PRIME MOVERS AMONG LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS AND AWAIT HIS REPORT ON HIS APPROACH TO KUZNETSOV. NOTE: IN MOVE THAT MAY DRIVE LARGE WEDGE IN ANY ATTEMPT BY CORRESPONDENTS TO HANG TOGETHER, WE UNDERSTAND "NEW YORK TIMES" BUREAU CHIEF HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO PAY INCREASED RENT WITHOUT QUESTION SINCE NO ISSUE OF "FREEDOM OF THE PRESS" IS INVOLVED. TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RENTS, JOURNALISTS, RENT CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770872/aaaacirv.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b505a45c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 189627, 77 MOSCOW 11550
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1632763
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CORRESPONDENTS' RENT HIKES
TAGS: OGEN, SOPN, AFSP, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b505a45c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009